

Message Text

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22-11

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 FMC-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1740

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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT MU

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT IN OMAN'S PORT CONDITIONS

REF: 75 MUSCAT A-64

1. THERE HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL LESSENING IN CONGESTION OF MINA QABOOS PORT IN MUTRAH. DURING LAST TWO MONTHS OF 1975, WAITING TIME FOR GENERAL CARGO WAS ONLY TWO OR THREE DAYS, AND TURNAROUND TIME FOR BERTHED SHIPS WAS CUT IN HALF. EIGHT SHIPS ARE NOW AT ANCHOR IN HARBOR WAITING TO BE BERTHED IN COMPARISON TO 32 SHIPS REGISTERED AND AWAITING BERTHS IN JULY 1975. SHIPPING CONFERENCE SURCHARGES HAVE BEEN DROPPED FROM 50 PER CENT TO 10 PER CENT OR NONE AT ALL.

2. PORT OFFICIALS ATTRIBUTE REDUCTION OF WAITING TIME TO IMPROVEMENT OF SHIP OFFLOADING. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY USING 250-300 PAKISTANI LONGSHOREMEN TO WORK AS SECOND SHIFT AT NIGHT. MUTRAH PORT OFFICIALS HAD PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE ONLY SINGLE SHIFT OF OMANI STEVEDORES. OMAN PORT AUTHORITY PLANS TO

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PURCHASE NUMBER OF CRANES AND OTHER CARGO-HANDLING EQUIPMENT IN

ORDER TO FURTHER THIS IMPROVEMENT IN OFFLOADING.

3. WHILE GENERAL CARGO IS UNLOADED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, HANDLING OF BULK CEMENT SHIPMENTS IS STILL SLOW. WAITING TIME FOR SHIPS CARRYING CEMENT IS NOW OVER 30 DAYS. PORT OFFICIALS ARE ONLY USING 3 OR 4 BERTHS TO UNLOAD CEMENT OUT OF POSSIBLE 10 IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE THAT GENERAL CARGO IS HANDLED EXPEDITIOUSLY.

4. BOTTLENECKS IN MOVING CARGO AWAY FROM PORT AREA REMAIN THE BIGGEST PROBLEM. CARGO IS STILL STACKED ALL OVER DOCKS, LARGELY BECAUSE CONTRACTORS AND LARGE IMPORTING FIRMS LACK ADEQUATE WAREHOUSE SPACE. DELAYS IN PROCESSING CARGO PAPERWORK ON PART OF SHIPPING AGENTS AND PORT ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IS ALSO A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR. DESPITE CLUTTER ON DOCKS, OMAN PORT AUTHORITY HAS NOT SOUGHT TO RAISE DEMURRAGE FEES FOR FEAR THAT IMPORTERS WOULD MERELY PASS THESE CHARGES ON TO CONSUMERS, AND THUS CONTRIBUTE TO ALREADY HIGH RATE OF INFLATION. WOLLE

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